A

SERMON

Upon 1 KINGS 17.15.

of the Widow of

SAREPTA

PREACHED

AT

Eaton Coll: Octob: 10. 1666.

Being a Solemne Faſt in conſideration of the dreadfull Fire in the Citie of *London*.

Sel. K 554

By

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UMI

1 KINGS 17. 15.

Abiit & fecit—— *She went and did according to the word of Elijah*—

BY His MAJESTIES Proclamation, we are commanded to meete here this day, Not onely to bewaile thoſe ſins, wherein we have contributed to the common calamity, and (like incendiaries) either kindled, or increaſed the late dreadfull Fire in our great and noble City of *London*. But beſides that, we are commanded to expreſſe our charity too, in a Liberall Contribution to the pooreſt of the City, that ſuffer moſt heavily.

Now for the firſt Duty [of ſad Repentance] I thinke I ſhall need to ſay little at

this time, becauſe I preſume your many former Faſts (in a ſenſe of Warre, and Infection) have already ſhowed that, before Almighty God himſelfe. But in this Faſt, our moſt Gratious and Indulgent King (in His tender love to His great city) would have us to let him ſee our extraordinary Acts of Charity, upon ſo publick, and ſo ſad an affliction.

Therefore He recalls to your memory a πύρωσις (as the *Helleniſts* call it) that is, a fiery triall, to ſee whether upon ſo great an occaſion, you are apt to admit large charitable thoughts, and interpret them in the deare language of Contribution, which will be this day uſed throughout all the Kingdome. In which thoughts, and acts, and language of Charity, that the pooreſt may be as forward as the rich (to their power in ſuch an exigence) I have choſen a Text, which will ſhow you a rare Patterne of Charity in a poore Widow. 1 *Kings* 17.15. *Abiit & fecit*---

Of which words, that we may ſo Speake, and ſo Heare---*&c.*

1 KINGS 17. 15.

And ſhe went and did according to the Word of Elijah, *and ſhe, and he, and her houſe did eate many dayes.*

If you aske *of whom this is ſpoken*--- It is ſpoken of *a poore Prophet* (*Elijah* the *Tiſhbite*) and *a poore widow* (the Widow of *Sarepta*.) The Prophet is ſo poore, that (wanting the former ſupply of meat which he had by a Raven, and the brooke *Cherith*, of which he uſually drunke, being dried up) he comes abroad now as a plaine Begger; for a little water and a morſell of bread: and the widow is ſo poore, that if you believe her upon her oath, ſhe hath not a piece of bread, to beſtow upon her ſelfe, and her onely ſonne. *As the Lord thy God liveth* (ſaith ſhe) *I have not a cake, but a handfull of meale in a barrell, and a little oyle in a cruſe; and behold I am gathering two or three ſticks, that I may goe in and dreſſe it for mee and my ſonne, that wee may eate, and die.*

Here is *poore encouragement for Elijah*, and little hope of finding hoſpitality in her houſe,

houſe; and therefore, ſure, he was hard driven now, that he begins with her, or at leaſt, they were all ſhrowdly put to it, as they were indeed. So ill it was with them, that hee could hardly have begged of any that had much to ſpare.

But there is more in it then ſo. Somewhat elſe there was, that made our Saviour ſay of her, to them of *Nazareth*, *Luk.* 4. *I tell you of a truth, that many widowes there were in Iſrael, in the dayes of Elijah (when the heavens were ſhut up three yeares, and ſix months) but to none of them was Elijah ſent, ſave unto Sarepta a City of Sidon, to a woman there that was a widow.*

Some rare good woman ſhe was, whom God had thus ſingled out, in this great famine, to ſo high a favour of miraculous preſervation, and (from all other) ſelected, *and ſet apart to be the Hoſteſſe*, and *Benefactreſſe*, *to the great Elijah.*

That ſhe was ſo, it will eaſily be diſcovered in the whole force, and vertue of the verſe, which referres eſpecially to her.

And

And that two wayes, *which are the two parts of the Text.*

1. In the high *commendation of her Charity* (*Abiit & fecit juxta verbum Eliæ.* There is a proofe of her charity in every word.)

2. In the *present reward of her Charity* (in her meale and oyle miraculously increased) *She, and he, and her house, did eate many dayes.*

There is *the Preservation of them all* alive, by the *multiplying of the Widows store*: whereof she had so charitably emptied her selfe upon the Prophet.

Or if you will have *both these Parts* of the verse (like severall degrees) *to make up the height of her commendation.*

In the first part of the verse, it is but *Charity*, In the second part it is charity and somewhat more: it is improved, and come *up to Hospitality.*

She grows rich with her vertues, and being not able to furnish him at present, with a piece of bread, she now becomes like some body, *able to entertaine him at her house*, as a Prophet: with a competent supply of all that he wanted; And *not any longer as a Beg-*

ger, with a little bread and water for him, while he ſtood without at the gate. For ſhe went and *according to the word of* Elijah, that is, ſhe fetched bread and water for him, while hee ſtood without at the gate.

Then he, and ſhe, and her houſe did eate together many dayes. That is, ſhe lodged, and entertained him in her houſe: and ſhewed her ſelfe as hoſpitable *then*, as ſhe had been charitable before.

1. *The firſt thing then*, that offers it ſelfe to our view, is her charity. And many circumſtances there be *to amplifie that*. Some *in reference to her ſelfe*; ſome in reference to the Prophet. Some in reference to the action here done, to the order and manner of it. All theſe are conſiderable in this action of the poore woman, and cannot (without injury both to her, and you) be paſſed over in ſilence.

There are foure at leaſt that refer to her ſelf,

1. She was a *Woman*.
2. She was a *Woman of Sarepta a Sidonian*.
3. She was a *Widow* woman.
4. She was a *Mother*, and ſhe was not only

Mater

Mater familias (the *Mr of a family*) but *Mater filii* (*the mother of a son too.*) And had she been eased of the rest of her family: she *had little enough to keep her selfe, and her son alive to the next day.*

These referre to her selfe, (and notwithstanding all these) she went first to supply the wants of *Elijah.*

Other considerations there are, *that referre to the Prophet.* And (amongst these) three that are most eminent, and must not be concealed;

1. 2. 3. That he was { *A Stranger*, one of another country from her; *A Prophet.* and chiefly *This Prophet* (*Elijah* the *Tishbite*)

That this man (whom she thus entertaines) was the very Prophet, I doe not say that foretold this famine (wherein they were all likely to perish.)

But more then so,

The only man, to whose zeale they wholly imputed this misery:

The maine instrument that brought it

upon them, and by whoſe meanes it ſeemed to be ſo long continued.

The man that ſaith, in the firſt verſe of this chapter [and in the preſence of the King himſelfe]

As the Lord God of Iſrael liveth, before whom I ſtand, there ſhall not be dew, nor raine theſe yeares, but according to my word.

He that had ſaid thus, would you thinke that his mouth ſhould be heard, and fed too? and with that food, that is therefore wanting to her ſelfe? would you thinke that her diſtreſſed houſe, ſhould be made a ſanctuary for him, and every thing ſhould be done (*juxta verbum ejus*) as he would have it that brought the famine upon them?

It is *a wonder ſhe falls not about his eares*, or (at leaſt) that ſhe doth not *raiſe up the people* againſt him, to *apprehend* him, and *take away his life*, that brought them all in danger of theirs.

But in that *ſhe conceales him*, in that ſhee *obeyes* him, in that ſhe *ſaves his life*: and ſaves it *with the hazard of her owne* and her *childs*: can there be any other circumſtance added to this wonder? Yes,

3. Yes, there can be ſo, for (as I told you) all this referres unto him, but now ſomething there is, that amplifies the *action it ſelfe*, from *the order*, and *the manner* of it.

1. *Abiit & fecit*, that is, ſhe doth it with *alacrity*, and chearfulneſſe (wherein the life of every good action conſiſts) without any more adoe, *without any further diſpute*, as ſoon as ſhe knew his mind, ſhe went about it.

Fecit juxta verbum Eliæ, that is, ſhe doth it *in that order that he would have it*, to ſerve him firſt, before ſhe provide for her ſelfe, and her ſonne

She *tooke not her owne method of charity* (to begin with her ſelfe and her ſonne) but ſhe *followes that order, that the man of God preſcribes her*, by ſpeciall diſpenſation.

Firſt and *preſently* to begin with him.

And thus, you ſee, in all there be three ſeverall wayes by which wee may perceive, the true extent of her charity, Now (to look upon them more diſtinctly.)

1. I will begin *firſt, with thoſe that reflect upon her ſelfe*, and (in that ranke) firſt to conſider her as *a woman.*

She went, and did according to the word of Elijah. we are here provoked to œmulation by the weaker Sex.

And it muſt be confeſſed, that as in many other vertues, by *Deborah*, by *Hannah*, by the foure *Maryes*, (and ſome of that ranke) ſo here in the workes of charity: we have a *Copy ſet by a ſilly woman*: I will not ſay that the greateſt Ladies, and Dames may learne to take out, but I will ſay more, that never any of the Nobler ſex have come ſo neare, as to expreſſe it, in all things, to the life.

And I *would they had onely out-ſtript us in Charity*, to which (*being more tender hearted*) perhaps we may perſwade them, that they are more inclinable by nature) but I feare they have ſometimes had the happineſſe to be *able to inſtance a prehemivence in ſomething elſe*.

I will not conceale what Saint *Chryſoſtome ſaith of his time*, (on *Epheſ.* 4.) that things were come to that paſſe: Men were growne ſo effeminate, ſo proud, ſo inconſtant, ſo phantaſticall, and women, on the contrary, ſo laborious, ſo diſcreet, and ſo reſolute, that he thought

thought it might be a queſtion διὰ τί γύναιξι διάλεκτον; [if it were Engliſhed, ſuch a queſtion from ſuch a one as *Chryſoſtome*, would pleaſe ſome women too much] And at *this time*, whereof we read in my Text, there was *no piety matchable to that of the great Prophet* Elijah, *but onely that of* Obadiah, that hid ſo many Prophets in a cave, and this of the woman, to whom *Elijah* came. And I doubt not, but *Chryſoſtome* was of opinion, that in ſome reſpects, ſhe exceeded the great *Elijah*, and *Obadiah* too.

For he ſeemes to conceive *Elijah* carried a little too farre in his zeale, and perhaps brought hither to be ſchooled of this woman; not ſo much by obſerving her want and miſery, as by ſeeing her wonderfull and *Charitable affection*, that, when he begged of her, preſently welcomed him with all her ſtore: Him, that was in no greater ſtreights then ſhe her ſelfe: Him, that had not, beſides himſelfe, a family alſo, to provide for, as ſhe had: and laſtly, Him, that being thus heard, at his firſt begging from her, yet would not ſo much as begge, and ſolicite his God by prayers,

Chryſ. Tom. 8. pag. 31. (H.S.)

prayers, for the releaſe of hers, and the common calamity.

O woman great is thy Charity!

I ſay not this to make women proud, that are commonly too apprehenſive of any fewell, fit for that vice to feed on, but *to encourage them*, and withall *to rouſe up the guides*, and Lords of the weaker Sex; that ſo we may have *Omnia benè*: Women being (after ſo good patternes and præcedents) ambitious of all vertue, to the higheſt capacity of their nature, and men expreſſing by their actions, that they move in a higher Spheare, and are as worthy of preheminence, as they are ready to challenge it by a grant, and patent, from the maker of them both.

But I goe on.

We have looked upon this Charitable perſon in her Sex.

2. Now we come (in the ſecond place) to conſider her in her country, *as ſhe was a Sidonian* a woman of *Sarepta*; how ſhe, that was ſo, went and did according to the word of *Elijah*.

Sidon was a City in *Syria*, by the Sea ſide, and

and bordering upon *Iudæa*, a very ancient and famous City, from whence, it ſeemes, the whole Territory thereabout were called *Sidonians*.

Among them is *Sarepta*, a leſſer and more obſcure Towne, ſome *ſix miles from Sidon*, and a place (as it was conjectured by the name) where they were wont to melt, and faſhion diverſe mettals. *And. Maſius in Ioſ.*

This Country of the *Sidonians*, was wholly *overſpread with groſs Idolatry*. And yet, you may ſee, by the manner of her oath, if there were no more, that *in the midſt of wicked Pagans, ſhe ſerved the true God*. And ſhe ſerved him *in no ordinary meaſure*, as appeares by this *high degree of Charity*. A *vertue that hath the Keyes of Heaven*, and by which only it may ſeem, God will pronounce his ſentence of bleſſing and curſing, at the laſt day, as if no other vertue were of like value with that. *Mat. 25.*

And no mervaile, For it is a vertue of ſo large uſe and extent that it may be called, the *Miſtris of the rich*, the *Mother of the* Poor, the *Patroneſſe of Widowes*, the *Nurſe of little Orphans*,

phans, the ſtore-houſe *and Treaſure of the needy*, and the common haven and *refuge* of all that are afflicted.

And in this virtue doth ſhe excell.

Neither is it charity alone, for which this *Sidonian* of *Sarepta* is ſo admirable in her ſelfe. A great and *wonderfull Faith* is the root, and commendation of this charity; and all her charity is but *the fruit, and evidence of a lively Faith.*

Nor have I yet ſaid all, *It is Faith accompanied with obedience to God and his Prophet*: a Faith wherein *ſhe caſt her ſelfe upon God's Providence*, reſolving, (ſince the Prophet would have it ſo) to feed him with that, with which, onely being left, ſhe had intended to preſerve her owne life, and the life of her child. She ſtopt her eares to the cry of her faint and hungry child, and *Abiit & fecit.*

An argument of ſuch a Faith in this *Sidonian* of *Sarepta*, as was not now to be found in all Iſrael: *So eaſily do the weake things of this world confound the things that are mighty, &c. The fooliſh things of the world con-*

1 Cor. 1. 27.

found

found the wiſe: And the very *Heathen ſhame the open Profeſſors* of true religion.

Many of thoſe profeſſors (not content with their owne) defraud, and oppreſſe, and detaine from others, that which is their due, but this *Sidonian*, in extremity of poverty, could *part with all that ſhe had* of her owne.

Many great profeſſors are loath to give upon extraordinary knowne and publique occaſions, but here is a *Sidonian*, that willingly empties her ſelfe in a private act of Charity. An act that will yet appeare the greater if you will now pleaſe to conſider,

3. *Her as a Widow woman too.* For ſo ſhe was, and yet, *Abiit & fecit.*

If any might be excuſed from deeds of charity, ſurely a poore widow might be ſo, but here is a good poore widow, that dreams of no ſuch priviledge, annexed either to her poverty, or to her widowhood, or to her virtue, or to any thing elſe.

She might have ſaid, Alas! I am a poore widow, that labour hard for what I have.

You ſee I have none in my houſe, ſo much at leaſure as to gather mee a few

ſticks: and yet, with all our paines, we have hardly enough to keep life & ſoule together.

What almes do you expect from mee? ſhe might have ſaid ſo, and many, in her caſe, would have ſaid it, but ſhe, good ſoule, lookes for none of theſe ſhifts. *If ſhe got any thing by ſtrength and labour*, ſhe was *willing to ſacrifice it unto him that beſtowed that ſtrength* of body upon her.

In her greateſt extremity, ſhe was *not ſo haſty to carve for her ſelfe*, but that ſhe had *rather be poorer in meanes*, if ſo ſhee might prove her ſelfe to *be richer in love to him*, that ever highly prized a little, given by them, that have but a little.

It would not be amiſſe for us, to be think our ſelves how much our love comes ſhort of thoſe many circumſtances, that make a wonder of hers, that ſo we may, with the great *Elijah* here, *borrow a little of her oyle*, to encreaſe, and *keep in the fire of our Charity*.

Then may we perhaps ſay, with Saint *Baſil* κἂν εἰς ἕνα ἄρτον, *If all our ſtore were brought to one loaſe and a poore ſoule ſhould truly want it, and aske for it, that one loaſe muſt be kept*

S.B. concion. habit. in Fam. & Siccit.

no

no longer in our ſtore:

Durus ſermo, you will ſay, but what Saint *Baſil hath ſaid, this widow hath done.*

Nay ſhe hath *done more*, for, ſhe had not actually ſo much as a loafe, ſhe had but the *poore materialls* of a loafe that might be: *and ſhe doth both make it for him, and give it too*: that he might have *her labour and ſervice, as well as her Charity.*

And what we have here done by this widow, that under the teſtimony of two it might be confirmed, we have alſo ſeconded by another widow in the Goſpel, to whom our Saviour gave that open teſtimony of her two mites. That widow gave *all of her owne accord*.

And, here in my Text, to take away all Apology from thoſe that are rich in meanes, and poore in almes, this poore widow hath done it, at the *Prophets direction*: which is the third thing wherein the extent of her Charity may fully appeare.

4. From thence we muſt yet goe further to a fourth *degree of amplification*, that we may looke upon her, as a *Mother*, that under-

valued

valued the power of naturall affection in a case of exigency, for the expression of her Charity.

And for this I wot well, that it was a singular case of particular dispensation, and therefore not idlie, or indiscreetly to be followed, with prejudice to the necessary supply of Kindred and Family.

But I look upon it here, as a thing that she easily, and *willingly* did, *never going about the bush*, to shelter a covetous, and *uncharitable mind*, *under the name of common Providence*, and naturall affection, *but making her Motherhood*, with such ease and cheartulnesse, give *way to her Charity*, as if she had went to teach all *Parents*, in this one act of hers, that *seasonable Charity* should rather *prove them to be wise*, *and carefull Parents*, then any way improvident, and forgetfull of their Children. A truth most certaine and undeniable, whether you examine *it in the poore to whom*; or the Children *and Family from whom* it is given.

1. If you consider the poore.

She was not, nor can we be ignorant, that

the poor (by a bleſſing upon their prayers, in our behalfe) may eaſily become *greater Benefactors*, then either we are to the poor, or any that are rich can be to us; For *the rich are full veſſels*: We rather ſpill then poure any thing into them that can be long reſerved, it is well if they belch you out a complement for the preſent, *but the poor are empty veſſels, capable and fit, whatſoever we pour into them, we treaſure up ſafe* for our ſelves, and ours, to the beſt advantage.

It will prove ſo in the meaneſt of them, they that are *blind* can beſt conduct us into the light of Heaven, *the lame* can beſt carry us into Paradiſe, *the ſick* can beſt cure our maladies, *the priſoners* can ſet us ſooneſt at liberty, *the Orphans* can ſureſt provide us of a heavenly Father, and (in a word) the *poor and needy can give us*, and our children the moſt *permanent riches*.

We uſually look upon them, as appearing abject and baſe in their perſons, and have quite forgot, *that they have put on the perſon of Chriſt*; for which cauſe our Saviour himſelf ſeems to ſpeake of them *as little*

tle Saviours, they ſhall bring you in to everlaſting Manſions (ſaith he) I know well how thoſe words may be underſtood (in the Hebraiſme) *they ſhall bring you*, that is, the Angels or *they that ſhall be appointed ſo to do*, As (in that other place) *Stulte hac nocte auferent, they ſhall take away thy ſoul*, that is, they which ſhall be appointed.

But I dare ſay if we have any mediators under Chriſt *next unto the Prieſts*, theſe are they, their plea, and their accuſation is of great moment.

Our Saviour tels us of *no other cauſe, heard in the day of Judgment*, but only theirs. And therefore we have reaſon to think, that *at other times his eares are as open to their prayers* for us.

So that hitherto the charity of a mother was well enough beſtowed, in regard of the poor unto whom.

2. But we muſt take ſome more paines, to look upon it in that which comes nearer to her particular caſe, *with an eye to her only child, and poor family*, from whom this almes was given.

Wherein

Wherein, to omit that *every man is left as a friend and Patron to the children of such persons*,

To say nothing of this,

She knew well for whose sake she did it, and she assured her selfe, that, when all her store was spent, *God's Providence was neither spent, nor any way more exhausted*; then it was before; therefore she was secure, though (being a Mother) she parted from all: She took it for a point of *wisdome to make God her heire*, and (upon so good an occasion) give *all to him, instead of a poore legacy to her child*: In which action she hath more *encreased her store by spending of all*; then any art of sparing had ever been able, either to compasse or contrive.

She hath proved her selfe *a gatherer, by scattering*.

She hath proved her Charity *artem omnium quæstuosissimam*.

You that would lay out to the best advantage, come hither and learne of her.

Would you be sure *to leave your children rich*, teach them by your own example, to be charitable, and not to love mony, but doing good with mony, for πενία, καὶ πλοῦτος προσωπεῖα μόνον εἰσι, *Chrys. Tom. 5. 234. H. Sau.*

 Rich,

Rich and poore are but parts acted here for a while, and we may be miſtaken in them.

When the *Scene is ended*, when death comes, then it appeares truly who were rich, and who were poore.

Then *Lazarus* may be found *in the rich mans boſome*, and *Dives ſo poore*, that *he is faine to begge* of *Lazarus* for one drop of water.

Or if you take rich and poore in your owne ſenſe, and for the preſent eſtate; Charity is the ſureſt way to ſpeed for that too: For, what is ſo given is ſafely laid up in God's hands, whence *none is able to ſteale it*, and *from whence you may expect it with encreaſe*, and be ſure never to faile of your expectation.

That treaſure which you commit to *the Sea*, to *your Friends*, to *your Servants*, to *your Cheſts*, to *your ſelves*, may eaſily miſcarry; but that which is *lent to God*, who hath all the treaſure of Heaven and earth at his command, and can not forget how much we are in his Books, That cannot *but returne with intereſt*: no debtor can aſſure us of ſuch certaine pay, as he alwayes performes: ſooner may we out-runne our owne ſhadow, then

any

any way exceed God's favour to us, by the love that we, for his ſake, expreſſe to others.

And if all theſe things be ſo, why do we not, by this example here, follow after *Charity as a virtue, wherein both our* owne welfare, *and the welfare of children and family*, doth chiefly conſiſt.

Why do we *ſtretch the deſires*, and attempts of our purchaſe, *beyond the true bounds*? Why are we ſo little affected with the preſent neceſſity of the poore, while we are *ſo tender of the meer imaginary wants, that may perhaps, I know not when, befall* our poſterity? Why do we *deſtinate* this, *and that*, and almoſt all we can finger, as ſtrictly and immoveably to our children, *as if we could make Lawes to God's Providence*, and what he hath given us, infallibly reſerve, to be ſo, and ſo diſtributed, at our pleaſure; or, *as if God had no more for them*, but onely that which we can leave them?

I ſhall eaſily grant, that great care muſt be taken in theſe caſes, and that therein a *ſingle man may have much advantage*: But, for all that, under pretence of this, we muſt not ſo

magnifie their wants that may be, that we undervalue the prelent and extreame wants of the poore; *That is a way to treasure up cruelty*, that may light upon our selves and ours hereafter.

Nor must we make use of *that providence of ours*, for a colour to serve our own turn, as we often do.

How else comes it to passe, *that in a suite at law* (by way of revenge) *to spend a whole estate*, any brave sparke would be induced to do it?

How is it, that if *a Parasite* or *worse companion* come in the way, *we can be free, and frolick*, and in neither of these cases, trouble our selves with care of posterity?

But if a good work call for our contribution, we cannot hear of that eare; if a poor man beg our almes, we shrink up the shoulders, and begin to take thought for wife and children; That is then readiest at hand to shift of our good deeds.

Tom 3. pag: 467. Hom. 20. H.S. Will you hear *how St Basil takes away this hindrance?*

VVhen thou comest to God (saith he) *to beg*

wife

wife or Children, or friends, doſt thou frame thy prayer thus?

Good Lord, give me wife and children, and friends, that while I embrace them, and joy in them, and lay up for them, I may be excuſed from other Chriſtian duties.

Beſtow them upon me, and then I *ſhall be lother to relieve the poor*, or give to the like pious uſes, or any ſuch way to put my ſelf into thy ſervice, or believe that thy providence will extend to them, as to me it hath.

Were not theſe fair conditions, to be commenced in ſuch a ſuite? were not this *a fair plea to ſave our purſes?* Can we imagine that God gives us our Children to make us covetous, or *will we ſo requite him* for ſo great a bleſſing?

Nay rather let us think him a wiſe man, that leaves nothing to them of that, which (in all reaſon) ſhould have been imparted to the neceſſity of the poore. For one penny, I do not ſay unjuſtly gotten; but *one penny unchariably kept*, may *eat up twenty other* that lie about it, and therefore the Widow here

takes not the care and wiſdome of a Mother, by giving that to the preſent ſupply of *Elijah*, that might rather ſeem fit to have been reſerved for the preſervation of her ſon.

But every way wherein we look upon her, ſhe is higher then our praiſe and admiration.

For (that I may now cloſe up this firſt reference) we have ſeen her here *a poore woman of Sarepta*, one that dwelt in the midſt of Idolaters, *one that hardly ever heard a ſerious diſcourſe of Charity*, one that never was ſo *charmed with the high* reward of *Venite benedicti*, as we have all been (I dare ſay) again & again.

Yet this woman of *Sarepta*, this widow, this Mother, *this poore diſtreſſed mother*, will have *Charity enough to ſhame us all*, if we look not better about us.

Neither her Country education, nor her widowhood, nor her poverty, nor her own hunger, nor her naturall affection to her only ſonne, nor the feare of death, nor any thing could hinder her liberality: *that never had halfe the knowledge, and meanes, and motives*

tives unto it, that we have had.

And yet we have ſaid but litle, we have onely ſpoke of ſo much as reflects upon her owne perſon; from thence we *come now to looke upon it in reference to the Prophet*, vvherein vve have *three ſteps*, Firſt as it *vvas done to a Stranger*: Secondly, as it vvas done to a *Prophet*: And thirdly, as it vvas done to *this Prophet*.

1. Firſt then, though ſhe have but little to give, *ſhe makes no ſcruple to beſtow it all upon a meere ſtranger*, that was in want; and ſo may we be *affected to ſtrangers* upon the like grounds.

We have God's *Præcept* for it to the Iſraelites, *Forſake not the ſtranger ſo long as thou liveſt*. We have *God's example* for it (in his bounty to all) *Et ne alicui quod Dominus communiter tribuit denegemus*, (ſaith St *Hierome*) if God have beſtowed his riches indifferently upon all Nations, why ſhould we doubt to beſtow our riches as he hath done?

And laſtly, we have alſo the *Practice of the Saints of God*; amongſt them we *find Abraham, lying in wait for ſtrangers* at the dore of his

his Tent, and when he found them, *not administring queſtions* and interrogations, like a Judge that were to examine, but, like a charitable and hoſpitable man, with all honour & readineſſe, *imbracing the opportunity of their entertainment.*

For which cauſe he was often honoured with the entertainment of Angels. As this poore widow is here likewiſe honoured with the entertainment of a *great Prophet.*

2. The ſecond thing to which now I haſten, and which was a greater motive to her; That he was a *Stranger*, was *rather a reſpect for which ſhe did not refuſe him*, but *that he was a Prophet*, hence came *the extraordinary* meaſure of her Charity in this place.

For whatſoever ſhe did, ſhe did it *for the love and honour of God*, and therefore now ſo readily, and freely, and amply, when ſhe light upon *a ſervant and Prophet of his.*

And this is ever *the ſcope of true and perfect Charity, not to aime at vaine glory*, not to be led with *hope* of *any temporary reward*, not to be moved to it with meere *naturall pitty*, not to have an eye to any thing elſe, but the love and glory of God. This

This is true wiſdome, & perfect Charity, *neither to looke upon her ſelfe* through the poore, nor *otherwiſe to looke upon the poore*, but remoter, or nearer, as they ſtand in ſome reference to God himſelfe. And that ſhould we learn to do, to relieve a *Chriſtian* in the name of a Chriſtian, and a *Prophet in the name of a Prophet*.

For; *barely to relieve* is *an act of nature*, we cannot but love & pitty, if we are our ſelves, and therefore our kindneſſe goes under the name of *humanity*, as being the proper, and peculiar affection of man. So that in the reliefe of others, it may fall out, that we only follow *the dictate of nature*, but that is far ſhort of the widows Charity here.

A Charity that ſhe prefers, not only before naturall affection, but even before that *kind of naturall affection that we ſhow to our children* (the moſt powerfull of all) In caſe that a Prophet comes to want, ſhe makes her *divine affections farre predominant* above her *naturall*: ſhe pincheth her ſelfe, and her ſon, to ſupply the wants of a Ghoſtly Father.

This ſhe hath done.

But I feare there is *a generation of men* in theſe

dayes, that would have been *otherwiſe affected* with the Prophets caſe.

We ſhould have no (*abiit & fecit*) with them, they would rather have ſaid, what, is the *great Prophet come a begging?* that is a good ſight, the *minor Prophets* will ſerve our turne, or a few good *mendicant Prieſts*, or ſome like *Ieroboams of the meaneſt of the people*, that is, as we would have it, and then could we *ſweetly ſhare their ſpirituall portions* amongſt us.

This ſome would have ſaid. Such as are ſo farre from being Charitable themſelves, that they *long to take away the Charity of others*, and ſwallow that of our ancient right, which former Church-devourers, *have left behind them* againſt their will, *or been forced* (in themſelves or their poſterity) *to caſt up againe.*

Surely ſuch men have not read that (in *Malachy*) which came from God's own mouth.

Mal. 3. 10. *Bring my tithes into my barne, and trie if I do not poure a bleſſing upon you.*

They conſider not what this widow could have told thē, that if *God ſo accept of that, which* (*being due*) *is given* to his Prieſts and Prophets, he could not but highly prize a liberall, and charitable

charitable hand towards them, when they are in need.

But this widows Charity went higher ſtill.

It will ſeeme but a ſmall thing, that ſhe did it *to a ſtranger, to a Prophet*, if you will now conſider it, as done to *this Prophet*, to *Elijah*.

How is that you will ſay, to *Elijah*, Nay, that is not ſo much, find me out but ſuch a Prophet as *Elijah*, and then, who would not do as the widow hath done? Say you ſo? If you are ſo well minded, I will find you out a greater Prophet then this, what think you of Jeſus Chriſt? what you do to *one of the leaſt of his Prophets*, you do to him, and he will ſet it *upon his own ſcore*, if it be but a cup of cold water.

Or if you will take it litterally, as it ſounds, and as it was ſpoken, would you have been willing thus to have entertained ſuch a Prophet as *Elijah*, if you had been in the widows ſtead.

I doubt me that too, for he was ſomewhat *a rough* and *plain ſpoken Prophet*, he was the Prophet by whoſe meanes the famine was ſo long continued: and (*verſe* 1.) you

may ſee, *that his zeal pinched them all.*

In which caſe I know not vvhat you vvould have done, but I vvill tell you vvhat others have done.

Within tvvo chapters from this in hand, you may find a *country woman of this widow's*, that (upon an expreſſion of his zeal) ſent him ſo kind a meſſage, that *he was faine to fly for his life.* And you may have another inſtance *from Ahab in a like caſe* to this in hand, in caſe of another famine whereof *Eliſha* had propheſied. *God do ſo to me, and more alſo,* (ſaith he) *if the head of* Eliſha (*the ſon of* Shaphat) *ſhall ſtand on him this day.* And *Herod* aftervvard did it to *Iohn the Baptiſt* (that came *in the power of Elijah*) for a little plain language in his ſermon, he made his head flie off his ſhoulders. This vvas the entertainment that they gave to ſuch a Prophet.

Will you now ſee, how this Prophet (that had done the like) was entertained by our poore widow? *Abiit & fecit*: *Shall I tell you* what that is, *by way of Cõment* on theſe words.

Firſt, *He asked water*, and ſhe grants it: Then *he asked bread*; ſhe ſaith, ſhe hath none, and

and (good woman) ſhe ſwears ſhe hath none.

By which eager expreſſion of her ſelfe, ſhe both excuſeth, and cleares her deniall, and ſhows *how ſorry ſhe is*, that ſhe muſt deny, and *how ready ſhe would have beene to have given* her bread too, if ſhe had had it.

And withall (which he did not demand) ſhe *confeſſeth how much, or rather how little*, flower, & oyle ſhe had in her houſe, that ſo by that flower, & oyle, *ſhe might win him to ſtay*, though ſhe had not bread for him at preſent.

Well, vvhen all her ſtore vvas reckoned, it proved *little enough for her ſelf and her ſon*, to keep them alive till the next day.

The *Prophet begges that of her*, and ſhe grants it, but he vvill have her go preſently to her houſe, he vvill have her *make it ready*, and he vvill have her come back to him to the gate, vvhere they talked together, and *bring it thither*.

She grants this too, *and all this ſervice*, all this Charity to the *Prophet Elijah*, the only man that brought the famine upon them.

All this to him, and *to him all this without any diſpute*, vvithout *any delay*, vvithout bid-

ding him come (at leaſt) to fetch it, and vvithout *conditioning* for a ſhare out of it, to relieve her ſelfe, and her ſon, being ſo put to it: She is as brief as ſhe is admirable. Not a vvord for her ſelf, but (*abiit & fecit*).

3 And novv I have brought you directly upon that vvhich is the emphaſis, and life of all, in the manner [*Abiit & fecit*] and in *the order* [*juxta verbum Eliæ*] If I may borrovv a vvord or tvvo *of them both together*, they ſhovv that ſhe did it *with obedience, and readineſſe*, and *labour*, and *ſilence*, and *humility*, and vvith any thing elſe, vvherevvith it lay in her povver, to ſend out her *Charity*, like the *Queen of vertues*; that ſhould ever *be attended with ſome followers or other, fit to wait upon her*.

For if ſhe had barely given her almes, ſhe had made God *a debtor only for the gift*, but now, when ſhe is ſo *ſerviceable*, ſo *quick*, ſo *ſolicitous*, and *ambitious* of it, ſhe hath ſo farre ingaged the King of Heaven, that he will have a *miracle* (*in the mouth of the Prophet*) to make her a *preſent requitall*, for ſuch a compleat Charity as that.

And

And indeed, if *Abraham* the Father of the Faithfull, that was ſo much confirmed, by often conference with God himſelfe. If he was *no otherwiſe rewarded*, then with a *miracle in his Iſaack*: It cannot be that this *roſe among the thornes*, this woman of *Sidon* that (in regard of the place wherein ſhe lived) was (her ſelfe) a *ſingular* mirrour, of faith, and love, and obedience: It *cannot* be that ſhe *ſhould be otherwiſe rewarded* then *in the like preſervation* of her ſelfe, and *her only ſonne*.

For (if you look well upon it) *what ſhe hath done, is not much unlike to that of Abraham.*

Abraham was commanded by God to ſacrifice the life of his only ſonne, and *Abiit & fecit*, he went about it.

She *was intreated by the Prophet*, to *offer up all the proviſion* that was then left to preſerve the life of her onely ſonne, and her ſelfe too; and ſhe went as willingly about it.

He went about it *ſecundum verbum Domini*, juſt in that manner as God had commanded,

And *She went about it, juxta verbum Eliæ.* that is, according to the word of *Elijah*.

In either act, In his, and in hers, there

vvas

was ſo much *Faith*, and *Love*, and *Obedience*, that I know not which I ſhould firſt admire.

But ſhall I *compare them* in that, which comes nearer to *the act in hand*.

How did *Abraham* behave himſelfe, when he was to be Charitable, and Hoſpitable, and how did ſhe?

Abraham was a *rich* man, and a *great* Prince that had a multitude of ſervants ready at command, & yet in the exerciſe of Charity he would *rather imploy himſelfe, then his ſervants*.

And what doth the good widow here? ſhe doth whatſoever the Prophet deſires, and whatſoever ſhe is able, & *ſhe doth it all herſelf*.

And there would be little difference, if *Abrahams* place, and wealth, had not made his ſervice and humility the more conſpicuous.

What ſhall we ſay then? If the great *Patriarck in the midſt of his wealth*; If the *good widow in the extremity of her poverty*; If both of them were ſo ſtudious, and *obſervant of the poore, as if they had met with ſome great Benefactors*:

If theſe righteous ſoules *hunted after Charity*, and have ſo *embraced it*, and pleaſed themſelves in it, ſhould wve (poor ſinners) either

either wholy neglect such *a soveraigne cordiall* against sinne, or, (at least *performe it so stately, or so coolely*, as if we had never heard of these motives, and patternes, which they have richly afforded unto us?

Alas to *give almes*, in it selfe is *no such great matter*; specially in *the rich* (who are *as God's stewards* over the poore) It *is not so much favour* in them, as *indeed Justice*, and so *plaine injury not to do it*.

Why else do the Hebrew so often expresse Charity by צְדָקָה which signifies justice?

Why doth the Greeke say (*Syrach*: 4.) *Sap.* 4.1.
μὴ ἀποστερήσῃς τὴν ζωὴν τοῦ πτώχου: the same (in effect) with that of *Salomon*, *keepe not thy goods from* *Prov.* 3.27.
the owner of it; that is, *give some* to the poore, *they have a right* to that part which is superfluous?

Why doe the Latine render, *Justitia* for *Mat.* 6.1.
ἐλεημοσύνη? μὴ ποιεῖτε ἐλεημοσύνην: *Nolite facere* justitiam *vestram coram hominibus*, doe not your *Almes* before men.

Doth not all this conclude, that, it is no such matter (in it selfe) to give almes? *It is no more then our duty.*

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Alas to *give almes*, in it ſelfe is *no ſuch great matter*; ſpecially in *the rich* (who are *as God's ſtewards* over the poore) It *is not ſo much favour* in them, as *indeed Juſtice*, and ſo *plaine injury not to do it*.

Why elſe do the Hebrew ſo often expreſſe Charity by צְדָקָה which ſignifies juſtice?

Why doth the Greeke ſay (*Syrach*: 4.) μὴ λυπήσῃς τὸν ζῶντα τῷ πτωχῷ: the ſame (in effect) with that of *Salomon*, *keepe not thy goods from the owner of it*; that is, *give ſome* to the poore, *they have a right* to that part which is ſuperfluous? *Sap.* 4.1. *Prov.* 3.27.

Why doe the Latine render, *Juſtitia* for ἐλεημοσύνη? μὴ ποιεῖτε τὴν ἐλεημοσύνην: *Nolite facere* juſtitiam *veſtram coram hominibus*, doe not your *Almes* before men. *Mat.* 6.1.

Doth not all this conclude, that, it is no ſuch matter (in it ſelfe) to give almes? *It is no more then our duty.*

But how then? (you will say) why, this is a great matter, to give almes *according to the patterne* set by the widow here: to give it *seasonably*, to give it *chearfully*, to give it *with her service and humility*, to *the extent of her meanes*, upon so good an occasion.

This is it that is worthy of notice and admiration: for there is nothing so sure, as that *God requires our almes* deeds, not so much *for the good of them that receive, as of them that give.* Or else *he is able enough to supply the poore*, without being beholden to the rich.

And therefore you shall ever find, that he is more *earnest about the manner of giving*, then about the thing it selfe: it is not a giver but a *chearfull giver* that he respects.

See it here in the case in hand.

Was it any such great matter, *that* Elijah *should come so great a journey*, to be entertained by a poore widow with bread and water?

Could not Almighty God have furnished him still with better provision, by *the service of a Raven*, as he did before?

Yes, he could have done it, nothing more easily: but that was the least intent in the Prophets mission. This

This was rather *the thing that was aimed at*: to *ſhow*, and *to crowne* the widowes Charity. To make it appeare, how *preſently* without any query, without *any ſcruple*, without any *partiality*, or favour to her owne urgent neceſſity, ſhe went about it, how *readily*, *and heartily*, not onely as a *chearfull*, but as an *humble* and a *dutifull* giver.

This is (if any thing can be) to make ſure for that, wherein the life of a good action conſiſts, *ſo to be Charitable as we ſhould be*, and as *we ſhall be*, if we follow the *rich patterne* of this *poore widow*, and *take it out by our owne practice*.

Which that we may be able, and willing to doe. So he grant, who is the God of all mercy and compaſſion, to whom ——

FINIS.

Oct 26 93